

# Saint John Paul II Center



March 1, 2023

## Written testimony of Asif Aleem, Administrator, Saint John Paul II Center, Nursing and Rehabilitation Center Concerning Skilled Nursing Facility Funding for SFY 2024 and SFY 2025

Members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Asif Aleem, I am Administrator at Saint John Paul II Center, Nursing and Rehabilitation in Danbury, Connecticut. Saint John Paul II Center has been providing nursing home care in our community for years. We are a 141 beds nursing home, and we have 115 employee working at our facility, and we are members of the Connecticut Association of Health Care Facilities (CAHCF).

Now three years into this unrelenting COVID-19 pandemic and public health emergency, our nursing home, the residents we serve, and our employees, continue to be challenged like in no other time in our history of providing services in Connecticut. I can *also* say that our nursing home is as determined as ever, and we feel that each week we are getting closer to a time when we can say the pandemic is behind us.

Never before experienced inflation and the ongoing staffing crisis are the top issues that are not addressed in the budget recommendation. We are unable to keep up with inflation. Cost of utilities, food and supplies have been increased. The proposed funding for nursing homes doesn't recognize what is happening on inflation, and we are asking you to recognize the real inflation that we are experiencing in the budget.

The severe staffing shortages our nursing home have faced during the pandemic is not letting up. We have to pay overtime, shift differentials, increased use of nursing pools, to retain staff at costs beyond what the state is paying in the Medicaid rates. Our skilled nursing facility needs more resources to boost the pay of our extraordinary employees, but the proposed budget doesn't address this issue.

The resources the state legislature previously provided us to boost staff pay has made all the difference over the last two years, but our employees are losing ground against inflation, just as we are. More funding is needed in the budget to address the unbelievable inflation we are facing and to help us with our soaring labor costs.

I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Thank you

Sincerely,

Asif Aleem